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THE FOUR INNOCENTS

A Play for Girls, in Three Acts

BY

MAXI SHERROD

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THE FOUR INNOCENTS.

Characters.

NANCIE,
KATE,
PATTY,
CLARA,
MABEL,
JUDITH,

} A Personally Conducted Party of Girls
Traveling in Europe.

MRS. BARKSDALE. Personal Conductor of GIRLS.

PANDORA,
ATHENA,
SOCRATESIA,
APHODITE,

} The Fresh Sisters.

MARIA CASTERVILLE. Chaperonne of the Fresh Sisters.

BRIGIDA O'BRIGGINS. The Maid.

TMP96-006727

THE FOUR INNOCENTS.

ACT. I.

TIME : Noon.

PLACE : An Island off the Coast of England.

SCENE : *Trees, etc. Fence with stile over it (any outdoor scene will answer). Enter MABEL, NANCIE and JUDITH, followed by MRS. B., and carrying baskets, pillows and magazines. All talking and laughing.*

MABEL (*looks around, drops basket and clasps her hands*). Oh ! Isn't this perfectly lovely and romantic looking !

NAN. Yes, it's pretty, but I don't see anything romantic about it. (*Turning to MRS. B.*) Mrs. Barksdale, can't we have our picnic here ? We won't find a better place than this ; it's so nice and shady !

MRS. B. (*removing her hat*). Yes, dear, just as you please. This is our last day in England and I don't want you girls to go back to America thinking what a grouchy old chaperon I am. So I'm going to be real nice and obliging to-day and let you turn this little island upside down if you wish. I only warn you not to tumble in the water. You might get wet and catch cold. (*Girls put down things and MRS. B. proceeds to make herself a comfortable seat with pillows.*)

CLARA (*sinking down upon stile*) I'm so tired ! I shouldn't have attempted to walk this far. Really I'm nearly dead. JUDITH (*giggling*). Oh, dear ! It's too

funny! You've been on the way to the grave ever since we left America, Clara, and I'll be willing to bet that I'll get there long before you do.

MABEL. Yes. It's queer, but you never can tell about people. I used to know two brothers. They called one Dumplin and the other String. Now Dumplin was as big and healthy as a Berkshire pig, but String was thin and sickly, and ancient looking. Honestly that boy had so many wrinkles in his face that it looked like a piece of crepe de chine. Anybody would have bet ten dollars against a toothpick that he'd be the first one to die, but his friends were all disappointed for he outlived Dumplin. Everybody loved Dumplin and his funeral procession was so long that you couldn't see the end of it through a double barrelled telescope. It took the last carriage a whole day to catch up with the hearse. Freddie and I were on the sidewalk when the procession passed and I heard a man talking to our yard boy who was mowing the lawn. He said "Say, Jake, who's dead?" Jake looked up from his work and said, "I don't know, boss, but I tink it's der man in der front wagon." (GIRLS *laugh*)

CLARA. What became of the other brother? Is he still living?

MABEL. String? No, he died very suddenly. He was in New York not long ago playing the rubber plant on top of the Singer building and he tumbled off. The fall jarred him a little and he went to his room. He had been there about five minutes when he fell asleep, rolled off the couch and broke his neck.

JUDITH. Did it kill him?

MABEL. Oh, no. It didn't kill him the least bit—just broke his neck. I wonder where the other girls are?

NAN. They'll be here directly. Stopped back yonder to look at some bugs. Let's have dinner, Mrs. Barksdale. I'm as hungry as the little chap who gets put to bed without any supper.

MRS. B. So am I, Nan. Actually, I believe I could almost eat a box of tacks with a relish.

CLARA. It would certainly be a great tax on the digestive organs.

JUDITH (*taking some newspapers out of a basket*). We'll have to use these papers for a table-cloth. I tried my best to make that old hotel man give me one but the hateful thing wouldn't do it.

NAN. You might have known that without asking him. He's actually so stingy that he slides down the baluster to keep from wearing out the carpet on his steps.

JUDITH (*giggling*). How queer!

MABEL. I'm glad he didn't give you a table-cloth. It's so nice and novel to eat on newspapers.

(*Enter PATTY and KATE*)

PATTY (*excitedly*). Oh! Girls, just look what I found! (*Girls gather around her and MRS. B. looks up from a magazine which she is reading*) It's a bug—almost exactly like the description of Poe's gold-bug. (*Holding it up*) See how it shines! It's a very valuable insect.

MABEL. How do you know?

PATTY (*resentfully*). How do I know? Shiverin' Sardines! Didn't I spend a whole year at school studying bugology? Hand me that string, Nan. I want to tie it so it won't get away.

MRS. B. (*looking at her watch*). It's after twelve, girls. You'd better fix lunch and then we can admire the bug when we get through.—(*GIRLS commence taking things out of baskets*)

KATE. I, for one, don't want to look at it. I haven't any patience with people who waste a lot of time and energy chasing around after bugs.

PATTY. What an abused creature I am! Isn't it awful, Mabel? No, Katie, dear, it's a settled fact that you wouldn't go bughouse about an insignificant little bug.

NAN. I should say not! You waste all your extra time and energy disagreeing with people.

JUDITH. What did you do with the other basket, Patty?

PAT. Oh, I forgot all about it! It's back there where I found the gold bug.

NAN. Come on, Judith. Let's go get it. Finish opening this can of lollers.

(PATTY hands can to her. Exit JUDITH and NAN.)

CLARA. Surely you girls had more sense than to buy canned lobsters. Thousands of people have been poisoned with them.

KATE. You wouldn't consider the after effects if you were hungry, Clara. But I don't believe you know what hunger is.

PATTY (*eating a cracker*). I can tell you that. Hunger is interest paid on starvation before it falls due.

MRS. B. (*throwing down her magazine*). I've almost finished paying my interest, then. Aren't you girls nearly through fixing things? (*Going towards one of the baskets*) I s'pose I'll have to help you.—“Many hands make light work.”

PAT. And too many cooks spoil the cake. (*Escorting MRS. B. to her seat*) Now you sit down, Mrs. Barksdale, and make yourself comfortable. We'll have lunch for this famishing crowd as soon as Nan and Judith come back with the other basket.

MABEL. Gee-whiz! Where did you get this cake, Patty? It looks like it's had a hard life. I suppose it was beat too much.

PAT. Bought it at an auction sale for fifteen cents.

MABEL. At an auction sale! Why, what a queer place to buy a cake!

CLARA. It was certainly cheap enough.

(*Enter JUDITH and NAN.*)

NAN. What do you think, girls? The basket's gone! We can't find it anywhere.

JUDITH. Isn't it the funniest thing you ever heard of?

KATE. Funny! I don't see anything funny about it.

PATTY. NAN, you're joking!

NAN. No, I'm not. I'll pledge you my word as an honest man. The basket has just mysteriously disappeared, that's all.

PATTY (*woefully*). Imagine a picnic without pickles. Now wouldn't that jar you?

CLARA. It's a shame!

PATTY. There were two big bottles full of them, and oh, Gee! I'm just dippy about pickles.

MABEL. So am I. Let's cry about it.

MRS. B. It's too bad about the basket, but I think we have enough to eat without it. You'll have to treat the crowd when we get back to town, Patty, as a punishment for leaving it behind.

PAT. Treat the crowd! Why, Mrs. Barksdale, I spent my last dollar for those pickles. Honest I did. And at present I'm so dead broke that if steamboats were five cents apiece, I couldn't buy an interest in the echo of the whistle.

(GIRLS *laugh*.)

NAN. If that's the case, then we'll have to forgive you, Patty.

PAT. All right, I'm willing to bury the hatchet—handle and all.

KATE (*impatiently*). Do you girls intend to eat anything? If you are going to stand around talking all day I 'spose I'll have to have lunch by myself.

PAT. Noble Katrina! If your highness will pardon and forgive my humble lowness for delaying this bountiful feast, let us now proceed to eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow some of us may be too grumpy to live with.

(GIRLS *sit down on the ground and begin eating*.)

MABEL. Doesn't it seem lovely to be out here? Hotel life isn't what it's cracked up to be.

NAN. I should say it isn't. I don't enjoy eating a

bit. Every time you look up from your plate you see a waiter staring at you with that "I wonder how much I'm going to get" expression on his face.

KATE. Pass the sandwiches, Judith.

CLARA. Yes, and the fare isn't good, either. I'm afraid it has helped to make me more of an invalid than ever. It's sad to think that I must go home to die.

JUDITH (*giggling*). Isn't it simply the funniest thing you ever heard of?

MABEL. I'm anxious to get home, but I'm expecting to live a while after I get there.

PAT. I'll shake hands with you. My cry is now, Oh, you San Antonio!

MRS. B. I must admit that I'm rather tired of traveling myself.

PAT. Yes, and won't it be nice to turn a corner without swinging on to a Baedeker to see what you're going to bump into next!

JUDITH. I'm going down to Bonn Avon to see Miss Estes as soon as I strike town.

MABEL (*clasping her hands*). And oh, Joy! Freddie's going to meet me at the train.

KATE (*disgustedly*). Yes, that's what's the matter with all of you. It's not San Antonio that you're so wild about. It's those little simple-minded dudes who wear out the sidewalks tramping the streets from morning till night. Thank goodness! I've never wasted any of my valuable time thinking about them and I don't intend to.

MABEL (*resentfully*). I don't care what you say, Freddie's a dear! And oh, girls! He's so crazy about me!

JUDITH. How do you know?

MABEL. Why, he told me so.

PAT. Now wouldn't that jar you?

MABEL. He said he loved me more than all the rest of the world put together.

NAN. You silly child! Don't you know they all tell you that?

MABEL. Oh, but he really meant it! I could tell by his tone of voice.

(JUDITH starts laughing and then chokes.)

KATE (*pounding her on the back*). That's just like you, Judith. You always did want to bite more than you could chew. But I suppose it's human nature.

PAT. I have not enjoyed a meal so much in ages.

MRS. B. (*wiping her hands with paper napkin*). I haven't either. It was great.

ELINOR. Oh! You're not through, Mrs. Barksdale. You must have some of Patty's auction cake.

MRS. B. All right. I 'spose it's my Christian duty.

CLARA (*trying to cut cake*). My, it's as hard as a rock! Girls, I don't think it's advisable to run the risk of eating it.

KATE. You're cutting it with the wrong side of the knife.

PAT. Give it here. (*takes the cake*) I'll cut it. (*Starts cutting*) I forgot to tell you it's a wedding cake. I'll cut for all of you. Who wants the first slice?

ALL. I do.

PAT. I'll start with Mrs. Barksdale and go all around the table.

(*Hands the slices around as she cuts them.*)

NAN. How did you happen to get a wedding cake at an auction sale?

PAT. Well, you see the bride ran off with the groom the day before the wedding. The cake was all made, and the bride's father happened to be an auctioneer so he decided to auction it off with the other things. There's a thimble in it and a dime and just oodles of other valuables.

MRS. B. (*tasting her cake*). Ugh! It's awful! The bride must have been a very sensible young lady.

MABEL (*tasting her's*). Well, I think so. I'd run from cake like this too.

CLARA (*making a wry face*). Hand me some water quick. Girls, I'm afraid this is is going to be the death of us ali.

JUDITH (*giggling and crumbling up her cake*). I wonder where the thimble is.

PAT. (*still cutting*). Oh! I'll come to it after while. (*Excitedly*.) Here's something now!

KATE (*looking over her shoulder*). Goosie! It's a big hunk of baking powder!

MABEL. Did you ever!

NAN. I'm afraid that auction man made up that wedding story, Patty.

PAT. Oh, no, he didn't. He said he used to be a preacher.

MRS. B. (*laughing*). I 'spose they asked him to resign then. I think I'll go and pick some wild flowers.

(*Take her hat and starts off the stage.*)

ELINOR. Wait a minute and I'll go with you.

PATTY (*still cutting cake*). You can all go if you want to and Nan and I will stay here and put the things in the baskets. It will save you the trouble of coming back this way.

MRS. B. (*over shoulder as she goes out*). All right then. You and Nan meet us at the landing in about an hour.

(*Exit MRS. B., KATE, ELINOR, CLARA, JUDITH and MABEL.*)

NAN. What's the use of cutting the rest of the cake up, Patty?

PATTY (*tasting it for the first time*). Nothing in it! Why, Nan, it's half full of quinine. Shiverin' Sardines! Give me something to take the taste out.

Nan (*laughing and handing her a piece of candy*). I'm glad I did not eat any, if that's the case. I never was particularly fond of quinine.

PAT. Just wait till I get through with that man! I'm going down there to-morrow and tell him exactly what I think of him, and it won't be anything complimentary either.

NAN (*looking through wings*). Say, Patty, what's this coming?

PAT (*jumping up and looking too*). Petrified Pancakes! It's either a side show or an escaped lunatic asylum!

(*Enter MARIA CASTERVILLE ridiculously dressed and carrying a huge fan which she constantly waves to and fro. She is followed by the four FRESH SISTERS and BRIGIDA O'BRIGGINS. The four girls wear short dresses and hair plaited down their backs. They are all eating pickles. BRIGIDA is clad in a bright green dress and her hair is screwed up in a tight knot. She carries a basket. She should be rather stout, with red hair.*)

PAT (*aside to NAN*). Those are *our* pickles. Now wouldn't that jar you?

(*MARIA looks around and stops when she sees the two girls, her fan suspended in mid air for a few seconds. The FRESH SISTERS drop their pickles and stare. There is a slight pause.*)

BRIGIDA (*in an astounded voice*). Howling Mither of Moses!!!

MARIA (*in a slow drawling voice*). This is atrocious! Perfectly atrocious!

(*NAN and PATTY laugh.*)

PAT (*turning to NAN*). In the name of the seven sacred crocodiles, what do you think of this?

PANDY (*to APHRO*). Aren't they queer-looking? Who do you suppose they are?

APHRO. I don't know.

ATHENA. I wonder were they came from?

SOCRAT. Perhaps they are wingless angels who have drifted down from the azure dome of heaven.

MARIA (*indignantly to BRIGIDA*). I must see the guards and have them arrested. It is an outrage! An atrocious outrage! Brigida, (*pointing to NAN and*

PATTY). Show these two creatures off the island.
(*To the FRESH SISTERS*). Come, girls!

(*She gathers up her skirts and sweeps off the stage followed by PANDORA, ATHENA, SOCRATESIA and APHRODITE, who stare at PATTY and NAN over their shoulders as they go out.*)

NAN. Catch me, Patty, I'm going to faint!

PAT (*to BRIGIDA*). Fair maiden, will you kindly explain this mystery to us?

BRIG. I have never had such a surprise since the dith of me old man Patrick. Begorra and how did ye two young loidies get here?

NAN. We came across in a boat.

BRIG. Yiss, miss. Sure an' that's the only way ye can come. But the guards niver let people come over here. Did ye not see the guards?

PAT Guards! I don't know any anything about them! You see there were a crowd of us girls and we wanted to have a picnic. It looked so pretty over here that we decided to come across.

NAN. We found a boat and there were 'two men lying near it asleep. Maybe they were the guards. We didn't want to disturb them so we came across in the boat. Of course we'll pay them for the use of it when we go back.

BRIG. Then you are right, Miss. The two sleepy-heads were no other than the guards themselves. Maria Casterville will have them arristed for their laziness. Sure and they niver did such a thing before. This slice of land is one of them islands belonging to Solomon Frish.

NAN. Who?

BRIG. Solomon Frish. An' have you niver heard of him?

PAT (*surprised*). You don't mean Solohen Fresh the millionaire, do you?

BRIG. Sure, Miss, an' he's the same. (*Nodding her head in direction of exit.*) Thim were his four daughters.

NAT. What! The dughters of Solomon Fresh?

BRIG. Yiss, Miss, and begorra I feel sorry for the poor little angels.

PAT. Why do you feel sorry for them? They have everything they want, don't they?

BRIG. Yiss, Miss, but that's not it! The poor dears have *niver seen a man*!

NAN. (*excitedly*). Never seen a man!!!

PAT. (*also excited*). Shiverin' Sardines! Go on! Tell us all about it.

BRIG. (*sitting down on stile*). Well, now, as ye are for axin me, I'll tell ye. It's the quarest sort of a proceeding! You see Mrs. Frish died here on the island when the four girls was little tots. His riverence Mr. Frish was so broke up over it that he went to Africa and he's been there iver since as far as I know. Sometimes I sort of wonder if he's still livin'. Do ye sippose he is?

PAT. (*impatiently*). I don't know. Go on!

BRIG. Yiss, Miss. He left the four children in charge of that dragon—Maria Casterville, and begorra! If he didn't write a last will and testament before he went, jist as if he expicted to die. The will explained as how the girls would not get a cint of his money if they looked at a boy. I've niver heard the loike of it, Miss.

NAN. (*disgustedly*). The crazy ole crank!

PAT. He was a cruel hard-hearted old beast—that's what he was.

BRIG. Sure and he was a quare sort iv a father, but I have me doubts. Me old man Patrick always said I had curiosity enough for two people and I giss I have, for I'd just loike to know exactly what that will has in it. Sure 'n if I could read, I would find out. That's what comes of not having an iducation. It's something Maria Casterville is kaping from the dear children.

NAN. Do you know where the will is?

BRIG. Yiss, Miss. Howling Mither of Moses! (*Joyfully clasping her hands*). I hadn't thought of it. Maybe you two can read it for me.

PAT (*eagerly*). Yes, we'll be delighted!

NAN. Do you really know where it is?

BRIG. Yiss, Miss. You're standin' right over the spot where it's buried.

GIRLS (*looking down at ground.*)

PAT. Buried!!! Come on, let's dig it up.

BRIG (*moving a small stone near where they are standing*). I put the stone there so I'd know where to find it.

NAN. How queer! What did he want to bury it for?

PAT. Hurry, Nan, and get the cake-knife. We can dig with that.

(NAN *looks for the cake-knife.*)

BRIG. (*getting down on her knees and digging with her hands*). You see, Miss, Maria Casterville, buried the will to keep me or any of the other servants from findin' it. Sure! And she didn't know I was watchin' her from behind a tree. Give me the knife, Miss.

(*Continues digging with knife. NAN and PATTY sit down on ground and watch the hole eagerly*)

PAT. But I don't understand what this Casterville woman didn't tear the will up or burn it if she didn't want you to see it.

BRIG. Sure and she was afraid to. Ye see his reverence Mr. Frish moight turn up alive at any minute and ask her for it.

NAN (*to PATTY*). Sounds like a fairy tale, doesn't it?

PAT. Yes. Won't we crow over the other girls when we get to the hotel, though? (*Looking into the hole*) Oh! You've struck something hard!

BRIG (*reaching down in hole and pulling out a box*). Yiss, begorra, an' it's heavy. (*Puts it down on ground.*)

NAN (*opens box and pulls out manuscript*). Here's the will!

PAT. But there's something else in the box.

(Takes out another piece of paper and accidentally turns the box over. A lot of gold and silver coins roll out on the ground. There is a few seconds' silence).

BRIG. Holy shades of old Saint Patrick!

PAT. Petrified pancakes!!! *(Turning to NAN.)* In the name of the seven sacred crocodiles: Say something!!!

NAN *(weakly)*. Well, I'll be flabbergasted!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

TIME: Evening of same day, several hours later.

PLACE: Girls' room in hotel at Liverpool.

SCENE: *Bedroom, furnished comfortably. When curtain rises KATE is sewing, MABEL writing, JUDITH seated on the bed and MRS. BARKSDALE and CLARA standing at window looking out.*

CLARA. I'm awfully worried about the girls!

KATE *(looking up from her sewing)* Pooh! I don't see anything to be worried about! Patty and Nan are both old enough to take care of themselves.

MRS. B. But there's no telling what might have happened to them. I think I'll go and look for them. Will one of you girls come with me?

CLARA. Yes, I will.

MRS. B. *(with her hand on door knob)*. Where's my hat, Mabel?

MABEL. If it isn't on my dresser it's behind the trunk. *(Exit MRS. B. and CLARA.)*

JUDITH. I think we should have waited at the landing for Nan and Patty.

MABEL *(thoughtfully biting the end of her pencil)*. But we naturally supposed they had left and who wouldn't have thought so? When we got across there was another boat at the landing beside ours, and when

we started back 'twas gone. But that's what's worrying me. I'm afraid the boat turned over with them—you know neither one of them can swim.

KATE. How perfectly ridiculous! Mrs. Barksdale and Clara will find them without any trouble.

JUDITH (*giggling*). I can't help thinking about those men.

MABEL. What men?

JUDITH. Those two men that the boat belonged to.

MABEL. Weren't they downright mad, though? I wish I could have understood some of their gibbering.

KATE. It's a good thing you didn't. I suppose they were blessing us out in gentle language. What are you writing, Mabel?

MABEL. A letter to Freddie.

JUDITH (*giggling*). Haven't you finished that letter yet?

MABEL. Oh, yes. This is another one, but I can't think of anything to say.

KATE. Tell him that for your sake I hope he has undergone a transformation since I saw him last.

MABEL. Maybe *you* do hope so, but I want him to stay just as he is, thank you.

KATE. Oh! I know that! You aspire to nothing. I can remember you used to have a wavering flicker of ambition but your beloved Freddie came along and blew it out and what might have been a bright flame is only a heap of charred ashes, with one image in view—Freddie.

MABEL. Well, Miss Smarty, just suppose you were a measly little old flame of light and a nice-looking fellow came along and blew real hard—wouldn't go out? If I'm a heap of ashes it's because I can't help myself, but there's one thing certain—ashes are perfectly harmless and fire *burns* sometime. (*Enter PATTY and NAN*). Where on earth have you been?

PAT. (*removing hat*). Oh, we've been out on a lark.

KATE. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Mrs. Barksdale is awfully uneasy about you.

JUDITH. Yes, she and Clara have gone to look for you.

NAN. Have they? I'm certainly sorry about it but it can't be helped.

MABEL. Please tell us where you've been?

PAT. S'pose we tell them, Nan.

NAN. All right. They'll have to know sooner or later so we might just as well tell them now.

KATE. I don't see why there should be any secret about it.

MABEL. Please hurry and tell us. I'm just dying to know.

PAT. Well, if you'll promise not to interrupt me.

ALL (*except NAN*). We won't!

PAT. Here goes, then. Girls, we have had the most marvellous kind of an adventure and if you don't consider us heroes when you hear about it, just thump your heads and see how vacant they sound on the inside. You all had just left and I was still sawing away peacefully on that bloomin' old cake when——er——(*a slight pause*).

(*A slight pause.*)

KATE (*impatiently*). Well, go on.

PAT. Do you think we really ought to tell them, Nan?

NAN. Yes, I 'spose we must.

PAT. Well, as I was just saying when you interrupted me, Kate, I had almost finished whacking that cake to pieces when our attention was attracted by the sound of footsteps. We looked up and saw a regular side show coming down the road. There was a ridiculous looking woman with a big fan followed by four girls and an Irish maid. The girls were rigged out in short dresses and looked slightly overgrown—But, ladies and gentlemen, there is one point here which I wish to stress particularly—these four girls were actually eating *our pickles*.

TOGETHER (*except NAN and PATTY*). Our pickles!

PAT. Yes. Now isn't that enough to straighten your kinky hair?

MABEL. What on earth were they doing with our pickles?

JUDITH. Of all the nerve!

PAT. (*rapping on table*). Order! Order! Ladies and gentlemen, I must speak now or forever hold my peace. Which shall it be?

MABEL. We won't interrupt you any more if you'll only tell us how they happened to have the pickles.

NAN. As I am a second cousin of Dr. Watson's I can explain that easily, They just found the basket and helped themselves like any other sane sensible minded girls would have done. Go on, Patty—we're wasting time.

PAT. Well, when the four girls saw us, they dropped their pickles and stared. The woman with the fan looked as though she could have killed us with a good grace. After a few gentle explosions she picked up her skirts and swept down the road followed by the four girls. The Irish maid was the only one who condescended to remain, and it was through her that we found out everything. You see it's this way—the four girls are the daughters of Solomon Fresh—

ALL (*together, except NAN and PATTY*). Solomon Fresh!

PAT. Nan, if anybody interrupts me again please suffocate them with a pillow. You know Mr. Fresh has oodles and oodles of money, but he believes that every girl should show that she is capable of supporting herself before she marries. He says that he was the first man his wife ever saw and the fatality runs in the family. He feels that the girls will inherit this weakness for the opposite sex so he wants them to make at least one hundred dollars apiece by their own efforts before they even look at a man. If they follow his instructions, his money will be equally divided among them, but if they fail to come up to expectations every cent will go towards aiding the perfection of the airship. That island where we had our picnic is the property of Solomon Fresh, and the home of the Fresh

Sisters. It is guarded on all sides to prevent people from going there.

MABEL. Then those were the guards that we——

PAT. When the four girls were little chaps, Mr. Fresh left them in charge of Maria Casterville and all these years it has been her duty to keep them from knowing the existence of man.

MABEL (*in a horror-stricken voice*). You don't mean to say they don't know what a man is—why if I hadn't seen Freddie——

(NAN puts a pillow over her head.)

PATTY. The Fresh Sisters don't know that they are free to marry the man of their choice if they follow the requirements of the will. Maria Casterville has never told them. Her reason for keeping it a secret from them has been simply this—she is paid well for what she does and she wants to keep the job. Brigida O'Brigins, the Irish maid, dug up the will for us—It was buried, you know—and that's how we found out its contents. With the will there was buried stacks and stacks of money to be used for the girl's expenses. You see Maria Casterville has been keeping it for herself. Now, girls, here comes the most startling part—Nan and I thought it was our duty to rescue the poor freshies from the clutches of Maria Casterville, so we brought them along with us.

KATE. Are you out of your head, Patty?

PAT. Oh, no—not at all.

JUDITH. Well, what on earth do you mean?

PAT. I mean that we did the brave and noble act and rescued the poor girls, and they're here in the hotel now. Why, Judith, you're as pale as a bucket of white-wash.

NAN (*sprinkling water in her face*). There now—don't get excited?

KATE. Is this a made up story, or have you two girls lost all the sense you ever possessed?

PAT. Neither one of the two, and if you want to get grumpy about it—just hand yourself a transfer.

KATE. But how perfectly outrageous and unreasonable. What in Christendom are you going to do with the four creatures?

PAT. Just take it from me, Katrina, we'll attend to that all right.

NAN. Yes, you needn't bother about it, Kate.

KATE. I must admit, it's certainly the freakiest thing I ever heard of.

MABEL (*clasping hands*). Oh, I think it's lovely. It's so unusual and novel.

KATE (*sarcastically*). Yes, it's a little too novel to suit me.

MABEL. Honestly, Kate, if I were as impolite as you are I'd go way off somewhere and fade away, because an impolite person isn't welcome anywhere.

JUDITH (*giggling*). I'm just crazy to see the girls.

KATE. If I may venture to ask you one question, will you answer it civilly?

PAT. Certainly. If you *ask* it civilly.

KATE. Well, now that you've gotten yourselves into this mess, how do you propose to get out of it?

PAT. Oh, we've arranged all that. There's a town named Clute about fifty miles from San Antonio. Ever heard of it? (KATE *shakes her head*) Well, the town is surrounded by a high wall and no man has ever been allowed to come on the inside of it. It is inhabited by man-haters—some old maids, but most of them divorced women, who after giving marriage a trial, have found that they don't espouse the noble cause of matrimony. Now, this is our plan. We want to take the four girls over there and give them a chance to make their \$400, before they even look at a man.

KATE. It's honestly ridiculous! Surely you don't realize what you are undertaking.

PAT. We most assuredly do and that's why we've told you about it. We want you to help us.

KATE. What do you take me for? I certainly have a *little* sense left, and you're mistaken, Patty, if you think I am going to help you make fools of yourselves.

MABEL. I'll be glad to help you all I can. That's what I call *real* charity.

JUDITH (*giggling*). It's about the funniest thing I ever heard of, but I'm with you.

NAN. (*to KATE*). Now all that remains is to convince you that you are in the wrong. Of course we can get along without you, but then we'd like for you to share our honors, too.

MABEL. How do you intend to keep the four girls in ignorance of the existence of boys on the voyage over to America?

PAT. Oh, we've figured that all out. You see, fortunately we sail for home to-morrow. Well, in the morning before leaving, Nan and I are going to buy four pairs of goggles—the kind that chauffeurs wear. Then we are going to have the glasses taken out of them and black glazed glass put in, so that it will be impossible to see through them. We'll get a cab with curtains to take the four freshies down to the steamer then we are going to convince them that their eyes are weak and it is necessary for them to wear goggles whenever they go out of doors. You see, Mabel, Nan, Judith and I can lead them along. Of course when they get in their staterooms they can take the goggles off, but whenever they go out on deck they'll have to wear them.

KATE. Of all the foolishness I ever heard of, this is the limit. Where do you expect to get the money which will be necessary to carry out your plans?

NAN. I thought we told you that Mr. Fresh left lots of money to pay the four girls' expenses while on the island. And you know none of this money has been touched.

MABEL. Where is the money?

PAT. We left it with the will down at the big bank on the corner.

MABEL. Does that Casterville woman know that the girls are gone?

NAN. No, but she's probably found out about it by this time, and I'll bet she's raising sand too.

KATE. Why don't you give the girls all the freedom they want, going over on the boat? They'll see enough of boys in that time to know that they don't want to marry.

PAT. Don't you fool yourself, Katrina. Why, Gee? If we did that, they'd all be married to sailors or waiters or head cooks before we got to America. Then they'd be terribly poor all the rest of their lives. But with our help they'll stay single till they have fulfilled the requirements of the will and then the big day's coming! You see we'll take them to San Antonio and the rest of their lives will be one great big gigantic jag of joy—they'll have all the money they want and they can marry whoever they please. Now, what do you think of that?

KATE. Oh, well, I suppose *you think* you're doing right but then—er——

MABEL. I say, Kate, why don't you help them out?

KATE (*after considering*). Well, I don't know that it would be any harm.

PAT. But listen. Don't say you're going to help us if you don't mean it—because whatever you do, don't be a trailer—be yourself!

MABEL. You'll help them, won't you, Kate?

KATE. Yes, I guess so.

NAN. I thought you'd see your mistake.

PAT. I gave the girls some dresses and told them to take off those ridiculous costumes Maria Casterville made them wear. I will see if they are through dressing and if they are I'll bring them in and introduce them to you.

JUDITH. Oh, goody! I'm just crazy to see them.

(*Exit PATTY.*)

MABEL. What are their names?

NAN. Athena, Pandora, Socratesia and Aphrodite. Rather queer, aren't they?

JUDITH (*giggling*). I never heard such funny names in all my life.

KATE. They *are* unusual.

MABEL. What do you 'spose Mrs. Barksdale will say when she hears about it?

KATE. She'll be simply thunderstruck and I'm afraid she won't like it, at all. It sounds so perfectly impossible.

MABEL. I don't believe she'll care a bit after she thinks about it a little while. You know she likes unusual things about as well as Nan and Patty do.

NAN. Please ring for some ice-water, Judith. I just happened to remember that I'am awfully thirsty.

(JUDITH *presses button*. Enter PATTY, followed by PANDORA, ATHENA, SOCRATESIA and APHRODITE.)

PAT. Now, girls, this is Athena, this is Socratesia, this is Aphrodite, and here's Pandora, but we're going to call her Pandy for short.

MABEL. Sit down, girls—we're so glad to have you with us.

APHRO. I do believe I'm dreaming. Everything is so strange.

PANDY. It seems so good not to have Maria Casterville around.

SOCRAT. (*putting one arm around PATTY and the other around NAN*). And you two brave and noble girls rescued us. You will surely be rewarded for it.

PAT (*winking at Kate*). See?

SOCRAT. We were like four withered flowers pining for want of fresh air and you two have brought us the sunshine necessary to make us lift our drooping heads and take a deep breath of the fragrance of life.

MABEL (*to Judith*). Oh, how lovely! I'll bet she writes poetry.

ATHENA (*picks up pencil and paper from table and turns to MABEL*). Oh! please stay just as you are. You'll make a lovely picture! (*Starts drawing and MABEL is immovable.*)

APHRO. You see ATHENA is an artist. She can draw pictures that look just like you.

JUDITH. How nice!

SOCRAT. 'Tis indeed a great talent to be able to

transform a lifeless piece of paper into the image of a living, breathing human being.

(Somebody knocks on door from outside.)

PAT. *(excitedly)*. Petrified pancakes! It's the porter!
(Runs to door and puts her mouth to the keyhole.) Say, please go away—we don't want you.

NAN. He has some ice-water, Patty.

PAT. Oh, has he?

(Opens door just the least bit, takes pitcher—shuts door and locks it.)

PANDY. What is a porter?

KATE. A porter is a boy who waits on people.

PANDY. Well, what is a boy?

NAN *(threateningly aside to KATE)*. Keep quiet, Kate.

KATE. A boy is a—a—an article who thinks it is everything and fails to be anything.

PANDY. What does it look like?

NAN. Oh, it's just an ordinary looking animal.

(JUDITH giggles.)

PAT. *(passing around water)*. Have you finished your picture, yet, Athena?

ATHENA. Yes, almost.

MABEL. Let's see it. Oh, how lovely! I'm going to send it to Freddie.

PANDY. Who's Freddie?

MABEL. Oh, he's a boy—er—I mean she's a girl friend of mine.

SOCRAT. Ah! It is the essence of pleasure to have friends—is it not? They help to smooth out the wrinkles of worry and fill the paths of joy with sunshine.

MABEL *(looking out of window)*. Oh, here comes Mrs. Barksdale and Clara.

NAN. Gracious! What are we going to do?

KATE. I'll fix that! Patty, you and Nan stay here and talk this matter over together. Come with me all of you girls. *(Turning to PATTY and talking in whisper.)*

I'll take these girls to their rooms and leave Mabel and Judith to watch them. Then I'll go downstairs, meet Mrs. Barksdale and explain matters to her.

PAT. Good for you, Kate.

(*Exit KATE, the four FRESH SISTERS, JUDITH and MABEL.*)

PAT. Kate's a trump when she wants to be, isn't she?

NAN. She certainly is. I hope she'll make things all right with Mrs. Barksdale.

PAT. I do too. If we can just get her on our side, it will be clear sailing after that.

NAN. Patty, now honestly, just between me and you, don't you think we've made a mistake in trying to undertake this wild goose chase, as Kate calls it? Do you think we are going to accomplish what we want to?

PAT. Of course we are, Nan. Surely you're not going to become a backslider this late in the game?

NAN. No, I didn't say I was, but nevertheless it's going to be a lot of trouble and work.

PAT. I know it's going to be a lot of trouble and you have to work to accomplish *anything*. Taft didn't become President of the United States just thinking about it.

(*Somebody knocks on door. PATTY opens it.*)

VOICE (*outside*). A card for you, Miss.

(*PATTY takes card and reads.*)

PAT. Shiverin' Sardines! Nan, it's Maria Casterville.

NAN. (*with a low whistle of astonishment*). We've gotten ourselves into it now!

PAT. (*to the PORTER outside*). Show the lady in here. (*Shuts door*). She'll probably blaze us out in a voice full of brick-bats, so we'd better not go down in the parlor. It's too public a place for a scene.

NAN. I'm frightened nearly to death, Patty. Just feel my hand. It's as cold as ice.

PAT. I'm scared myself—but there's not a bit of

danger. She can't do anything to us and besides we have the four girls on our side.

NAN. The hateful old thing! I don't blame the girls for wanting to get away from her.

PAT. You just wait—we'll settle her hash.

(*Enter MARIA CASTERVILLE with her fan, as usual*).

MARIA. This is atrocious! Contemptibly atrocious!

PATTY. Is that all you have to say! I'm glad you take it so calmly.

MARIA (*stamping her foot*). I demand the return of the four Fresh sisters immediately!

PATTY. I'm sorry, but we can't part with them.

MARIA (*angrily*). You contemptible young viper you! Unless you tell me where they are, I'll report you to the police and have you arrested!

PAT. You'll change your tune when I tell you that I have possession of *the will of Solomon Fresh!!!*

MARIA (*dropping her fan and grasping a chair for support*). The will! Surely you haven't the will!

PAT. I certainly have. I can tell you everything that's in it. You have been a false, contemptible woman. You have kept money for yourself that should have been used for the expenses of the girls and you've kept the requirements of the will a secret from them in order to keep your position. Now contradict that if you can.

MARIA (*starts toward door and stops*). It's a lie and I'll have my revenge!

PAT. (*pointing to door*). There's the door. I'd advise you to go through it.

(*Exit MARIA CASTERVILLE.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

TIME : *Morning.*

PLACE : *Clute.*

SCENE : *Room fixed up as a store, with different articles for sale, soda water, ice cream, etc., etc., with counter.*

ATHENA *is seated on counter, drawing.* APHRODITE *making a soda drink,* SOCRATESIA *watching her, and* PANDY *wiping glasses. They all wear aprons.*

Enter NAN.

NAN. Well, girls, how's business?

APHRO. I'm afraid it isn't going to be good to-day.

PANDY. You see most everybody's out of town on a picnic.

APHRO. Want something to drink?

NAN (*sitting down*). Yes. I have such a cold that I can't taste anything, so give me whatever you have the most of. What are you drawing, Athena?

ATHENA (*holds out picture*). I'm copying a picture.

NAN. That's fine. Say, how do you girls like your new occupation?

SOCRAT. We're charmed with it! Oh, it's delightful to be able to quench the thirst of a weary woman. It is a charitable calling and a noble trade.

(NAN *begins drinking soda water.*)

(*Enter MRS. R. and CLARA.*)

MRS. B. (*looks around*). Good morning, girls. What a nice place you have!

CLARA (*sinking down on stool*). Really, I feel as though I'm going to faint.

MRS. B. Give her something to drink, PANDY. It will do her good.

PANDY. Don't you want something too, Mrs. Barksdale?

MRS. B. No, dear, not now. I'll take something after while.

(*Enter PATTY.*)

PAT. Hello, girls! Why, how did you get here, Mrs. Barksdale?

MRS. B. Clara and I came down in Mr. Ford's electric——

PAT. It's the first time you've been here, isn't it?

MRS. B. Yes. I intended coming sooner but haven't had time.

APHRO. We're so glad you came.

NAN. You'll have to take in the town. Clute's a rather interesting place, you know.

PAT. Do you remember Dr. Oliver's daughter, Mrs. Barksdale?

MRS. B. Why, of course I do.

PAT. Well, she's in San Antonio now.

CLARA. Is she the one that's so rich?

PAT. Oh, no, just wealthy enough to steer clear of her poor relatives. She's kinder stingy, you know, and she used to be so afraid that somebody would ask her to loan them money that she went out to Colorado where she didn't know anybody and lived by herself.

SOCRAT. Perhaps she preferred the solitude of the simple life.

PAT. No, she was just downright stingy.

NAN. Maybe she was, but *couldn't* she give you good things to eat, though?

PAT. Please don't talk about anything good to eat, Nan. I haven't had a decent square meal since Mrs. Herff's luncheon at the Country Club. Shiverin' Sardines! But wasn't that fruit salad the best you ever tasted?

NAN. It certainly was.

MRS. B. How do you feel, Clara?

CLARA. Really, I think I'm in a very critical condition.

MRS. B. I'm going to tell your mother to keep you on a diet of raw eggs. I've heard of cases where they proved wonderfully beneficial.

CLARA. I'm afraid they wouldn't help me any.

I've tried so many things and I don't seem to get any better. I just can't help worrying about myself.

NAN. You ought to practice Christian Science and learn that you mustn't court trouble—court a boy. It's the same thing.

(The 'phone rings.)

PAT. I'll answer it.

(Takes down receiver, others continue talking.)

MRS. B. What are you thinking about, Aphrodite?

APHRO. I was just wishing I could see Brigida O'Briggs again.

NAN. But you don't want to go back to the island, do you?

APHRO. Of course I don't want to go back, but then I do get a little lonesome for the place sometimes.

SOCRAT. So do I. 'Tis the idealism of life to live in the presence of nature—to go out into the cool shady pathways of the forest, to pluck the timid blushing wild flower, to hear the brittle leaves gently crushing beneath your footsteps, to see the startled squirrel spring up the vine-clad tree, to watch the sunbeams dancing in their joyful sprightliness, and at last to find a mossy seat beneath some sheltering oak, to drink in the fresh, cool, fragrance of the dewy atmosphere, and to marvel at the wonderful mechanism of nature.

NAN. Gee! That sounds like Shakespeare, doesn't it?

PAT *(who has hung up the receiver and looks slightly agitated)*. Mrs. Barksdale, wouldn't you like to see something of the town before you leave?

MRS. B. Yes, Patty, I certainly would.

PAT. Well, Pandy, you four girls take Mrs. Barksdale out and show her the sights. The rest of us will stay here while you're gone.

PANDY. Oh, how nice of you! I was just dying to get outside. It's so nice and sunshiny. *(They all take off aprons except ATHENA and she continues drawing.)*

SOCRAT.. Yes, it's a glorious day. All of nature's children are dressed in their gayest costumes.

PANDY (*starting towards door*). Come on, Mrs. Barksdale. Hurry up, Athena.

ATHENA. I don't want to go. I'd rather stay and finish my picture.

PATTY. Oh, but you must. The exercise will do you good.

APHRO. You can finish drawing that when you come back.

ATHENA (*reluctantly taking off her apron*). All right. I suppose I do need a little fresh air.

CLARA. I think I'll go too. I believe the walk will do me good.

MRS. B. We won't stay long, girls.

[*Exit the four FRESH SISTERS, CLARA and MRS. B.*]

PATTY. What do you think, Nan? Maria Casterville is in town.

NAN. Maria Casterville.

PATTY. Yes, Maria Casterville.

NAN. How do you know?

PATTY. Kate just 'phoned me that she was, and that's not all, either. You remember, Nan, she told me she was going to have her revenge. Well, what do you 'spose she's up to? She secretly came here to Clute several days ago and she's gotten in with Mrs. Orliff, the Mayor of the town, and persuaded her that the place would improve lots faster if she would just allow a few men to come in and build up things. Of course the men are willing to come just for the fun of the thing. So sometime to-night the gates are going to be opened and a crowd of boys are coming out from San Antonio in their machines. You see Maria Casterville is deliberately trying to ruin our plans. Now isn't that enough to give a chicken the toothache?

NAN. It's perfectly outrageous! The contemptible old mess! I just hate her, anyway. Let's don't give up, though. We've gone this far and we just *must* succeed. It's our duty to see that those girls finish making their \$400 before night comes.

PAT. Yes, and we'll do it if it kills us.

NAN. They've made quite a lot of money already, haven't they?

PAT. Yes, I think so, but then we want to be on the safe side. Kate, Mabel and Judith will be down here in a few minutes, and we're just going to buy out the whole soda fountain. But won't Maria Casterville be disappointed, though!

NAN. And won't we have a grand celebration to-night! Do you know I'm glad that Casterville woman is going to stir up things, for it will make us get to work in dead earnest.

PAT. Yes, that's the truth, because if you know you just naturally *have* to do a thing within a certain length of time, you usually end up by doing it.

NAN. Did you say Mabel was coming too?

PATTY. Yes.

NAN. By the way, did you know that she and Freddie are going to be married next month?

PAT. I'm glad to hear it. If she waits much longer all her friends will be in the poorhouse.

NAN. Why?

PAT. Because she's had only twenty linen showers. Just draw your own conclusions.

(Enter KATE, JUDITH and MABEL. GIRLS greet each other effusively).

MABEL. Well, what do you girls think of Maria Casterville's little game? It looks as though she means war, doesn't it?

PAT. Yes, but the poor old girl's going to get the worst of it. We'll do some tall old fighting before we give up.

MABEL. I don't think there's any danger of us having to give up, though. Of course they'll make the \$400 all right. Just think! I told Freddie about it and he said to give them an order for twenty freezers of cream to be sent to him at San Antonio. He said to put lots of cherries and nuts in it. You know he wants it to be real expensive. I have the money here—in my purse—to pay for it in advance. Isn't he a dear?

KATE. That *is* right nice of him.

PAT. It certainly will help out a lot, but we'll have to get busy anyway. You can't run anything long with a force of hot air. It takes a little concentration. My friend Mike Kinney says whenever nature really wants to do anything she concentrates. For instance take a cyclone. That is nothing but concentrated wind. A gentle spring zephyr just floating around never attracts much attention, but let a few of these zephyrs get together and decide to do business—then look out.

(Enter CLARA and the four FRESH SISTERS who speak to GIRLS and then start putting on their aprons).

NAN. You certainly did get back in a hurry. Where is Mrs. Barksdale?

APHRO. Clara was so tired that we had to bring her back and Mrs. Barksdale thought she had better go home as it is rather late.

JUDITH. We are awfully thirsty, so please give us something to drink.

(APHRODITE, PANDORA and SOCRATESIA begin mixing drinks. ATHENA resumes her drawing).

PAT. Did you show Mrs. Barksdale the watermelon patch down on the corner, Pandy?

PANDY. Yes.

NAN. You just ought to see it, Kate. It's wonderful how things grow down in this country.

PAT. It certainly is. Those watermelon vines grow in such a hurry that all the rind gets rubbed off of the little melons trailing along behind.

(GIRLS laugh.)

MABEL. I didn't know you had a dimple, Judith. Freddie says it's awfully hard for a fellow to tell when a girl laughs whether she really means it or is just trying to show off a dimple. *(JUDITH giggles).* You don't keep Martinis, do you, Socratesia?

SOCRAT. No. We are strictly temperate.

THE FOUR INNOCENTS.

MABEL. Give me a lemonade, then.

KATE. There was a fellow in one of McCutcheon's books who used to get his at a restaurant where the waiters were all Dutch and he complained that whenever he ordered dry Martini they always brought him three.

NAN. Poor fellow! I suppose he did his complaining after the bill came in.

PAT (*sitting down with a saucer of cream in one hand and a glass of soda water in the other*). Gee! but this cream is good.

JUDITH (*handing her glass to PANDY*). I'll take some more, Pandy. I never was quite as thirsty in my life.

PANDY (*to JUDITH*). Do you know I didn't think you were a bit pretty when I first saw you, but I think you're real nice-looking now.

JUDITH (*giggling*). How funny! I'm glad you think so.

PATTY. That's perfectly explainable. Circumstances alter faces, you know.

(*During conversation the girls are constantly having their glasses and saucers refilled.*)

MABEL. Yes, that is the truth, because when I first met Freddie I thought he was hideous, and now——

KATE (*interrupting*). Oh, never mind about telling us what you think *now*. We know you think he is a second Apollo, and that he ought to have his head done in bronze and stuck up on every street corner in San Antonio. Really, Mabel, I cannot understand how you happened to fall in love with Freddie. He is such an ignoramus.

MABEL. Freddie's not an ignoramus. Why, he's even brighter than I am.

KATE. Well, I hope so. You don't even know the seven wonders of the world.

MABEL. What will you bet that I don't?

KATE. I won't bet anything. I'll just *see*. Now tell us the seven wonders of the world and describe each one.

MABEL. Describe them! Why, I didn't say I could describe them, did I?

CLARA. Unless you know a thing thoroughly you might as well not know it at all.

MABEL. Well, here goes then. The first wonder is—er—wait a minute, let me see. Oh, yes! The first wonder is the Hanging Gardens of Doubtfulness. The gardens are suspended on wire ropes and are full of beautiful looking flowers, but if you examine the flowers closely you find that it is difficult to tell whether they are cultivated flowers or just common old weeds. I think the gardens were built by Nebercennezer or some of those fellows in the Bible.

CLARA. What holds them up?

MABEL. I told you they were suspended on wire ropes.

CLARA. Yes, but what holds the ropes up?

MABEL (*impatiently*). Oh, slush! Anybody ought to know that. Why they are hitched on to telephone posts of course. Now the second wonder of the world is the Labyrinth of Perplexity. It's a cave all full of twists and turns and lots of people have been lost in it. Next comes the Colossus of Hope. It's a statue holding a light and peering into the darkness. Then comes the Temple of Love. It's a great big marble palace and you have to select a guide to take you through it. It's just like heaven inside. It is all full of Cupids who run around and wait on you, and the furniture is made in the shape of hearts. (*Aside to PATTY.*) Was that right?

PAT. I don't know. I suppose it was.

KATE (*interrupting her*). Never mind about the rest. You know them.

JUDITH. Where did you learn so much, MABEL?

MABEL. Oh, part of it is hereditary and I learned the rest at Bonn Avon.

NAN. Clara, aren't you going to drink anything else?

CLARA. Of course not, and you girls are going to be terribly ill if you don't stop.

PAT. (*after cautiously pouring her soda water into a bucket which is on the floor near her.*) I haven't had near enough yet. (*Hands glass to APHRODITE*) I'll take a "coke" for a change, Aphy, and listen, fix me up a freezer of grape sherbet. I have a sick friend in San Antonio that I want to take it to.

APHRO. Can't you get it there?

CLARA. Of course she can. They keep anything you want at Wagner's.

PAT. Oh, I know—but I won't have time to stop by there to-night.

CLARA. I don't see why. It's all foolishness to buy it here and besides there's not enough room in the machine for it.

PAT. Look here, Clara, you just run your own little dinky one horse peanut stand and I'll run mine. In other words, 'tend to your own business.

(*Enter BRIGIDA O'BRIIGINS, very gaudily dressed and carrying a carpet bag, which she drops at the door. She runs up to the girls and embraces them very affectionately.*)

BRIG. Howling Mither of Moses!!! Shure and Brigida is gloid to see her own darlin' lambs once more.

PANDY. When did you come?

APHRO. How did you get here?

SOCRAT. We're so glad to see you!

ATHENA. Why didn't you let us know you were coming?

BRIG. Shure and I'm too mixed up to answer questions.

JUDITH (*giggling, aside to MABEL*). Isn't she funny?

PAT. (*to BRIGIDA*). Well, come on and have a drink with us, then.

BRIG. No, I niver drink, Miss. I belong to the Wimmin's Timperance Union. Me husband Patrick drank enough to keep us both drunk all the rist of our lives. Shure and he could niver tell the difference between a push cart and a peanut wagon.

NAN (*laughing and handing her a glass of soda water*). Oh, but this won't make you drunk. It hasn't a bit of whiskey in it. It's soda water.

BRIG. (*tasting it*). Shure and it's good. Now, me angels, I'll till you how I happen to be here, Your own litter arrived saying as how you were lonesome to see me and I make up me moind to come to you and surprise you.

PANDY. But, Brigida, where is Maria Casterville?

BRIG. Shure and she's right here in the same town with you.

APHRO. What! Maria Casterville here!

SOCRAT. Surely you must be mistaken, Brigida.

BRIG. No, niver was I more certain of a thing, and she's up to some divilment, too.

ATHENA (*to PATTY*). Maybe she wants to get us back. You won't let her take us, will you?

PAT. No, never. I'll protect you with this strong right arm of mine.

MABEL. And if it's necessary to have a man to protect you, I'll 'phone for Freddie to come down here.

PANDY. I'm going to ask you an honest question and I want an honest answer. *What is a man? And who is Freddie?* (*GIRLS look at each other in amazement.*) You may think I'm an idiot, but I'm not one.

PAT. The game's up, girls. We might as well tell them. They'll know to-night, anyway. (*Takes a bunch of keys from wall and hands them to NAN.*) Here, Nan, go over there and open the bank and count the money. (*NAN proceeds to follow instructions.*)

JUDITH (*following her*). I'll help you.

PAT. Now, Pandy, a man is—is—er—a man is a fellow who takes the place of a meal ticket.

PANDY (*shaking her head*). I don't understand yet.

PAT. Petrified pancakes! Tell her what a man is, Kate.

KATE. A man is a human being who excels woman in only one thing—his own estimation. He is a combination of egotism and egoism and——

MABEL (*interrupting*). Kate, how *can* you say such

things? There's not a word of it true, Pandy. A man is the most perfectly lovable creature on earth. If you could only see Freddie, you'd think so too.

PANDY. Is Freddie a man?

MABEL. Yes, and you see Freddie loves me and I love him and we both love each other so we're going to be married!

PANDY. Married! What does that mean?

PAT. Marriage means getting into a lot of trouble because you haven't sense enough to stay out of it. It means cooking, dish-washing, house cleaning, mending, darning and sewing on buttons.

(Exit KATE.)

MABEL. Patty, I'd be ashamed of myself. It doesn't mean anything of the kind. It means having a nice little home of your own and somebody to love you all of your life.

BRIG. No, Miss, you are mistaken—I lived with me old man Patrick for twinty years and niver had nayther av the two.

(Enter KATE.)

KATE (*excitedly*). Hurry, girls, and finish counting the money. The boys have come already. I heard them give nine 'rahs for Clute as they came through the gate. Of course they'll come here to the drug store the first thing. (*Looking up from her counting*) Oh, it will be all right. There's going to be some left over.

PAT. (*helping them count*). But we *must* hurry and get through before they come.

CLARA. What's all the excitement about?

APHRO. Why are you in such a hurry to count the money?

JUDITH. Here's a hundred and ten in this pile and fifty in this—that makes—let me see—one hundred and sixty— How much have you, MABEL?

MABEL. A hundred and seventy-five.

NAN. And here's \$75.10. (*takes pencil and piece of*

paper and figures it out.) Hurrah! That makes \$409.10.

KATE. We've made a success, girls—a howling success! Just think! \$409.10 and some left over.

NAN. I just feel like shouting! I'm afraid the poor airship will never be perfected.

MABEL. If Freddie were only here!

PAT. (*holding up a glass of red soda water*). Here's to the downfall of Maria Casterville and the success of the four Freshies!

CURTAIN.



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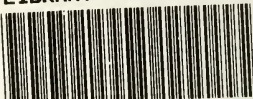
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